

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2725

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 6211

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AR

SUBJECT: ANALYSIS OF SITUATION AT ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTRY

1. UNDER MINISTER IGNES THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS, IN OUR VIEW, THE MOST EFFICIENT CABINET OPERATION IN THIS GOVERNMENT. THOUGH HE WAS AN OFTEN ARBRITRARY AND AUTOCRATIC LEADER WHO ALLOWED THE MINISTRY TO FALL INTO A SHAMBLES ADMINISTRATIVELY, VIGNES NONE-THELESS GAVE CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTA-TION OF HIS POLICY OBJECTIVES. EVEN HIS BITTEREST CRITICS IN THE MINISTRY, AND THEY WERE NUMEROUS, AGREE HIS WAS A SUCCESSFUL STEWARDSHIP, PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE HANDICAP AN UNSTABLE GOVERNMENT IMPOSED ON HIS FREEDOM OF ACTION.

2. DURING HIS TENURE, HE AND A VERY SMALL GROUP OF CLOSE, TRUSTED ADVISERS REVIEWED POLICY OPTIONS AND TOOK THE STEPS REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT VIGNES'S POLICY DECISIONS, USUALLY LEAVING THE BULK OF THE MINISTRY IN IGNORANCE OF THEIR ACTIONS. IN THIS ENVIRONMENT, THE EMBASSY, WHICH HAD EXCELLENT CONTACTS WITH HIS SENIOR ADVISERS (PULIT, FIGUERERO, MOLINA SALAS) COULD MAINTAIN A DIRECT AND FLUID DIALOGUE WITH THE GOA ON A WIDE VARIETY OF ISSUES. HOWEVER, SINCE MAY WHEN VIGNES WAS DRAWN DIRECTLY INTO THE DOMESTIC POWER STRUGGLE, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS BEEN WITHOUT EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP. EVEN THE MOST ROUTINE FUNCTIONS NOW OFTEN TAKE WEEKS.

3. PARADOXICALLY, THE NEW FOREIGN MINISTER, ANGEL ROBLEDO, WHOSE APPOINTMENT WAS GREETED WITH GREAT ENTHUSIASM BY MINISTRY  
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PERSONNEL, HAS ADDED TO THE SENSE OF AIMLESSNESS THAT PERVADES

THE MINISTRY AT THIS TIME. ROBLEDO, A KEY ACTOR ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT, HAS DEVOTED ALMOST ALL OF HIS TIME TO PERONIST PARTY POLITICS AND CABINET INFIGHTING TO THE NEGLECT OF HIS DUTIES AS FOREIGN MINISTER. FURTHER, WHEN HE ASSUMED THE MINISTRY, HE LEFT THE TOP ECHELONS INTACT AND BROUGHT NO CLOSE PERSONAL ADVISERS WHO COULD SPEAK FOR HIM IN THE MINISTRY. AS A RESULT, NEITHER VIGNES'S OLD INNER CIRCLE NOR THOSE ASSISTANT SECRETARIES NOMINALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR KEY AREAS FEEL THEMSELVES IN A POSITION TO MAKE THE DECISIONS REQUIRED TO FORMULATE, IMPLEMENT OR EVEN COMMUNICATE ARGENTINE THINKING ON A HOST OF IMPORTANT ISSUES. THE SITUATION HAS DETERIORATED TO THE POINT WHERE EVEN THE EMBASSY'S CLOSEST CONTACTS ARE RELUCTANT TO VOICE "OFF-THE-RECORD" ASSESSMENTS OF GOA THINKING ON EVEN RELATIVELY MINOR MATTERS.

4. OUR COLLEAGUES IN OTHER EMBASSIES AROUND TOWN SHARE OUR FRUSTRATIONS AT NOT BEING ABLE TO GET INFORMATION OUT OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND MOST HAVE THROWN UP THEIR HANDS IN FRUSTRATION.

5. IN FACT, THE SITUATION MAY YET DETERIORATE FURTHER. ROBLEDO HAS PUBLICLY STATED HIS INTENTION TO "PURGE" THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN "THE INTERESTS OF IMPROVING EFFICIENCY." THIS WILL PROBABLY KILL ANY LINGERING SPARK OF INITIATIVE IN HIS SUBORDINATES. WHILE IT WAS NATURAL TO EXPECT EFFICIENCY OF ALL THE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES TO SUFFER PERIODS OF POLITICAL UPHEAVAL, THE VERY FACT THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY AND INDEED VIRTUALLY ALL MINISTRIES AND KEY AGENCIES WITH EXCEPTION OF PERHAPS MINISTRY OF ECONOMY ARE VIRTUALLY AT STANDSTILL IS IN ITSELF BECOMING A FACTOR WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO THE WORSENING OF CURRENT CRISIS.

6. WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE U. S.: FOR THE U. S. GOVERNMENT, DISORGANIZED CONDITIONS AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ARE FELT MOST ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES. ON IMPORTANT BILATERAL TOPICS WE CAN, WHEN NECESSARY, GET HEARING AT HIGH ENOUGH LEVEL TO INSURE RECEIVING SOME RESPONSE. HOWEVER, ON MANY UN AND HEMISPHERIC TOPICS, THIS APPROACH IS NOT FEASIBLE AND OUR DEMARCHES OFTEN LANGUISH BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTIES OUR CONTACTS HAVE IN GETTING DECISIONS FROM THE RESPONSIBLE

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7. UNLESS REMEDIAL ACTION IS TAKEN SHORTLY, ARGENTINA, WHICH HERETOFORE HAS BEEN A COOPERATIVE AND EFFECTIVE COLLABORATOR ON MANY HEMISPHERIC TOPICS, WILL NO LONGER PROVE TO BE SO EFFECTIVE A PARTNER.

WHILE THE GOA'S POLICIES IN THE HEMISPHERE HAVE NOT MODIFIED, ITS ABILITY TO CARRY THROUGH ON ISSUES OF INTEREST TO USG HAS

SERIOUSLY ERODED.

8. AFTER THIS CABLE PREPARED FOR TRANSMISSION, WORD CAME THAT ROBLEDO HAD BEEN APPOINTED INTERIOR MINISTER. IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR WHETHER HE REMAINS FOREIGN MINISTER AS WELL. EITHER WAY, CHANGE PORTENDS FURTHER DISARRAY AT FOREIGN MINISTRY, AT LEAST FOR MOMENT. ROBLEDO CERTAINLY CANNOT MANAGE TWO MINISTRIES. AND IF A NEW MINISTER IS APPOINTED (AS SEEMS LIKELY), THERE WILL BE INITIAL PERIOD OF SHAKEDOWN. IF NEW MINISTER IS COMPETENT AND DEDICATES HIMSELF FULL-TIME TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HOWEVER, HE COULD DO MUCH TO SET THINGS RIGHT AT THE SAN MARTIN PALACE.  
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